

To: City Council Committee on Mayor-Council Transition
From: Citizens Advisory Committee on Mayor-Council Transition
Re: Reconsideration of Establishing a Legislative Analyst Office
Date: May 31, 2005

The CAC strongly endorses the creation of an Office of Legislative Analysis (OLA), and we are urging you to reconsider the May 26 council committee decision that apparently rejected the establishment of an OLA. Please consider the following chain of events:

- Prop F prescribed a list of charter changes to establish a mayor-council form of government. However, Prop F omitted certain important elements that must be in place to make the new system fully functional.
- The city hired a consultant team and created a CAC to help identify required changes and to make sure that no details fell through the cracks during this transition year.
- The CAC and consultant identified a major problem early in the transition process, namely that Prop F omitted adequate provisions for the city council to obtain expert and unbiased legislative information, reports, analysis, and recommendations. The consultant and CAC agreed that an OLA would be an essential tool for the council's legislative work and for responsible decision-making.
- While individual council offices will continue to generate specific proposals and responses, the full council and the public also require independent, professional, and evenhanded input on legislative and other matters affecting the public that are not primarily budgetary in nature.

Please note that there are many side benefits of an OLA, any of which would justify its establishment :

- 1) it would allow the council to be more independent and proactive in proposing legislation, instead of simply reacting to legislation proposed by the mayor;
- 2) it would free up valuable council staff time for work on district issues and constituent services;
- 3) it would provide appropriate checks and balances between the legislative and executive arms of government; and
- 4) it would do double-duty by providing information and analysis to council committees.

In addition to restating our support for an OLA, we also wish to restate the CAC position concerning the urgent need for a comprehensive overview and schedule of remaining transition tasks to guarantee a smooth and legal changeover to the new form of government on January 1, 2006.

We hope you will take us up on our offer to help organize a joint meeting of council, city manager, city attorney, consultant, and CAC representatives, plus a professional project manager, to create a realistic work plan for the half-year remaining in this transition period.

Respectfully submitted,

Norma Damashek

Norma Damashek & Doug Sawyer,
CAC on Mayor-Council Transition